



To
Sh. Ramesh Pokhriyal
The Hon'ble Minister
Ministry of Human Resource Development
Government of India
Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi

14 April 2020

RE: Submission regarding "Books to be categorized as Essential Goods"

Dear Sir,

The **Association of Publishers in India** is submitting this request to categorize **Books** under the list of essential goods amidst the ongoing COVID19 outbreak.

In the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, books have so far been excluded from the list of essential items. We would like to base our appeal on the premise that, Right to Education is a fundamental right granted to the citizens of India and books are the primary tool to uphold it.

Unfortunately, Coronavirus crisis has brought the education system to a sudden halt by closure of all educational institutions. These are unprecedented and grievous times, and just like newspapers, media, magazines, we request you to consider books as essentials. In this day, when all systems are broken, Books are essential use for self-development and training for the skilling and learning that the workforce will need to prepare for the looming job market challenge. Learning must go on, students should be able to access textbooks, faculty should gain access to courseware to prepare for upcoming academic year and most importantly, our people should have this chance to immerse themselves in stories and reading that keep news induced anxiety and stress at bay.

We understand that online learning opportunity in India is insufficient to reach the students outside of the Tier-1 cities. Another hindrance is the fact that it also mandates access to a computer or at the very least smart phone which is not a standard equipment in Indian households due to an affordability challenge. Books are a highly democratic learning tool that reach every nook and corner of our country and can help train the citizens of the future. Globally as well, in countries like US, UK, Australia and many others, Books & Bookstores are considered essential and have been made available to the public.



As publishers, we are doing everything we can to support our society with knowledge needs that are authenticated and reliable. We have opened our online libraries to give free access to various materials for schools, colleges, teaching and general reading. Our complete research publications on COVID19 are being made available free of cost for use on our research portals. We have speeded up publication in the area of public health and support medical and pharma research by sharing up to date global research in the fight against Corona.

The ecommerce already in place for essential items can support deliver physical books anywhere in the country by taking all essential precautions. The local printing industry can sustain automated production with social distancing while providing necessary employment. Authors and editors continue to work from home, enabling content to continue to be available to readers at all levels. Our PM Shri Narendra Modi has always reiterated that reading strengthens our imagination. We as publishers have the tools to realise this and therefore urge for the government's support in making Books available to the people again by declaring them essential items.

Yours faithfully,

Nitasha Devasar

President, Association of Publishers in India

The Association of Publishers in India is a trade organization that stands for the promotion and advancement of international publishers in India as well as protects the common interest of members and professionals engaged in global publishing.

Copy: Sh. Amit Khare, Secretary, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India